

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA
ROANOKE DIVISION

IN THE MATTER OF THE SEARCH OF
A blue Apple cell phone, Model A2172,
bearing IMEI: 353042115312170

Case No. 7:21mj143

AFFIDAVIT IN SUPPORT OF AN
APPLICATION UNDER RULE 41 FOR A
WARRANT TO SEARCH AND SEIZE

I, Todd C. Phillips, being first duly sworn, hereby depose and state as follows:

INTRODUCTION

1. I, Todd C. Phillips, am currently employed by the United States Postal Service Office of Inspector General (USPS-OIG) as a Special Agent and have been employed in this capacity since September 2012. I am presently assigned to the Mid Atlantic Area – Roanoke, VA Sub-Office to investigate the use of the U.S. Mail to illegally transport controlled substances, in violation of Title 21, United States Code, Sections 841(a)(1), 843(b), and 846. I have participated in investigations involving narcotics, mail theft, financial fraud and, among other things, have conducted or participated in surveillances, the execution of search warrants, debriefings of informants and reviews of taped conversations. Through my training, education, and experience, I have become familiar with the manner in which one or more individuals involved in criminal activity communicate during the planning, commission, and following the crime in an effort to discard or conceal evidence.

2. As part of my duties as a Special Agent, I investigate the use of the U.S. Mail to illegally transport controlled substances and drug trafficking instrumentalities, in violation of

Title 21, United States Code, Sections 841(a)(1), 843(b), and 846. I have been trained in various aspects of law enforcement, including the investigation of narcotics offenses. Through my education and experience, and that of other agents, I have become familiar with the methods that individuals use to traffic narcotics through the U.S. Mail.

3. This Affidavit is based upon my personal knowledge, experience and training, and other information developed during the course of this investigation. This Affidavit is also based upon information and experience imparted to me by other law enforcement officers. Because this affidavit is being submitted for the limited purpose of establishing probable cause and securing a search warrant, I have not included each and every fact known to me concerning this investigation. I have set forth only the facts that I believe are necessary to establish probable cause to believe that violations of Title 21, United States Code, Sections 841(a)(1), 843(b), and 846 have been committed.

IDENTIFICATION OF THE DEVICE TO BE EXAMINED

4. This Affidavit is made in support of a Search Warrant Application for authority to search a blue Apple cell phone bearing International Mobile Equipment Identity (IMEI) number 353042115312170 and Subscriber Identity Module (SIM) 8901260196798900280 (**Item 1**), “Attachment A” hereto, and for authority to view all digital or electronic content involving the commission of crimes pertaining to the U.S. Mail including, but not limited to, obtaining, purchasing, shipping, receiving, possessing, distributing and/or trafficking in narcotics, as evidence, fruits, and instrumentalities in furtherance of violations of Title 21, United States Code, Sections 841, 843(b), and 846. As more particularly described in “Attachment B” hereto, the items to be searched include text/SMS messages/MMS messages, emails, call history including calls made, received, and missed, contact lists, photographs and deleted photographs,

video, location data (to include map data), internet browser history and search terms, documents, and applications or apps (and data) that allow communication (Facebook, Facebook Messenger, Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter, etc.) and allow the creation or storage of documents. **Item 1** was in inmate property at Roanoke County Jail from the time of Yamahni Hickinson's arrest on June 24, 2021 until October 12, 2021. On October 12, 2021, **Item 1** was transferred to inmate property at Western Virginia Regional Jail along with Yamahni Hickinson.

5. The applied-for warrant would authorize the forensic examination of **Item 1** for the purpose of identifying electronically stored data particularly described in Attachment B.

6. Probable cause exists to believe that executing this warrant will lead to evidence of an offense involving the trafficking of Fentanyl in violation of 21 United States Code 841(a)(1) (Manufacture, distribute, or possess with intent to distribute a controlled substance), 843(b) (Use of communications facilities in commission of narcotics offenses), and 846 (Attempt and conspiracy to manufacture, distribute, or possess with intent to distribute a controlled substance).

PROBABLE CAUSE

7. Since on or about April 13, 2021, your Affiant has been investigating Yamahni Hickinson for his role in the distribution and trafficking of narcotics purchased by both those known and unknown to law enforcement. These controlled substances are shipped through the United States Postal Service (USPS).

8. On April 13, 2021, your Affiant applied for and obtained a Search and Seizure Warrant from the Western District of Virginia, U.S. Magistrate Judge Robert Ballou, 7:21-MJ-53, for two USPS Priority Express Mail parcels bearing tracking numbers "EJ 612 586 006 US"

(hereafter referred to as Parcel #1) and “EJ 612 585 990 US” (hereafter referred to as Parcel #2) both addressed to Daquan Harolt, 1066 Greenhurst Ave NW, Roanoke, VA 24012. The warrant was executed by your Affiant and Parcel #1 was found to contain approximately 192 grams of a green leafy substance appearing to be marijuana, approximately 147 grams of white circle pills imprinted “RP 10/325”, and the slide of a Glock pistol with serial number BRWZ237. Parcel #2 was found to contain approximately 223 grams of a green leafy substance appearing to be marijuana, and the grip trigger assembly of a Glock pistol with serial number BRWZ237. The 192 grams of green leafy substance and slide of a Glock pistol were returned to Parcel #1. The white circle pills imprinted “RP 10/325” were replaced with inert calcium dietary tablets and returned to Parcel #1. The 223 grams of green leafy substance and only the packaging materials the Glock grip trigger assembly were contained in were returned to Parcel #2. Both parcels were resealed.

9. Continuing on April 13, 2021, your Affiant was notified by a USPS supervisor that a customer came into the post office located at 1515 Courtland Road NE, Roanoke, VA 24012 asking for Parcel #1 and Parcel #2. The supervisor advised the customer provided their last name, Hickinson, and cell phone number 281-940-9399. Your Affiant made inquiries via Accurint, an electronic database that has proven reliable in previous investigations in determining the legitimacy of name, address, and phone number information. Accurint detailed cell phone number 281-940-9399 was associated with Yamahni Hickinson.

10. On April 15, 2021, your Affiant, acting in an undercover capacity, delivered both Parcel #1 and Parcel #2 to the front porch of 1066 Greenhurst Avenue NW, Roanoke, VA 24012. Law enforcement observed Daquantas Howard retrieve both Parcel #1 and Parcel #2 and return inside the residence. A state search warrant was executed on 1066 Greenhurst Avenue NW,

Roanoke, VA 24012 whereby both Parcel #1 and Parcel #2 were located opened and empty on the kitchen floor. Parcel #1 contents were located in the kitchen. Parcel #2 contents were located in a bedroom under a bed. Additionally, law enforcement seized an AR-15 pistol with loaded magazine and a black iPhone cell phone bearing IMEI number 351732272844997 from the same bedroom. Daquantas Howard was the only person occupying the residence at the time of delivery.

11. On April 20, 2021, Virginia State Police obtained and executed a search warrant for Daquantas Howard's cell phone bearing IMEI number 351732272844997.

12. On or about April 27, 2021, your Affiant received a copy of the Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Forensic Science Certificate of Analysis for the two hundred and seventy eight (278) white round pills imprinted "RP 10/325". Separate analysis of five dosage units were each found to contain Fentanyl (Schedule II). Additionally, visual examination of the physical characteristics, including shape, color, and manufacturer's markings, was consistent with a Schedule II pharmaceutical preparation containing Oxycodone and Acetaminophen; therefore, the contents were inconsistent with dosage unit labeling.

13. On April 28, 2021, your Affiant received USPS recorded security video from the post office located at 601 W. Baker Street, Baytown, TX 77521, that was recorded on April 12, 2021. Your Affiant observed an African American male approaching the customer retail window with two parcels appearing to be the same size and color of Parcel #1 and Parcel #2. Additionally, USPS business records detail Priority Express Mail postage in the amount of \$48.20 for each Parcel #1 and Parcel #2 was paid for with cash. These records also show the transactions occurred from 3:10 p.m. to 3:15 p.m. Your Affiant compared the African American

male in the recorded security video to a Yamahni Hickinson booking photo taken March 2, 2018, at the Albemarle-Charlottesville Regional Jail and noted they appeared to be the same person.

14. On May 3, 2021, your Affiant served T-Mobile Custodian of Records with USPS-OIG Subpoena Duces Tecum 211307 for subscriber information and phone toll records for cell phone number 281-940-9399 from March 29, 2021 through April 26, 2021. On May 27, 2021, T-Mobile provided the subpoenaed records to your Affiant. The subscriber name for the account was Hubert Hickinson. Device details for cell phone number 281-940-9399 were IMEI 358370062085167 and SIM 8901260196798900280.

15. During an initial review of Daquantas Howard's cell phone extraction report, law enforcement observed his cell phone number was 540-494-3900.

16. On July 8, 2021, your Affiant requested and received a call detail records frequency analysis for the subpoenaed toll records for cell phone number 281-940-9399 (subscriber Hubert Hickinson). Your Affiant noted from March 29, 2021, through April 15, 2021, cell phone number 281-940-9399 (Hubert Hickinson) made or received 28 calls of various durations with Daquantas Howard's cell phone number 540-494-3900.

17. On August 19, 2021, your Affiant referred the Yamahni Hickinson investigation to law enforcement in Houston, TX. On September 13, 2021, law enforcement in Houston, TX advised Yamahni Hickinson may be in custody in the Roanoke, VA area. On September 29, 2021, your Affiant confirmed with local law enforcement that Yamahni Hickinson was arrested on June 24, 2021 and had since been in custody at the Roanoke County – Salem, VA jail.

18. On October 5, 2021, your Affiant began reviewing Yamahni Hickinson's recorded jail calls. Your Affiant identified a call from Yamahni Hickinson to Daquantas Howard

at 540-494-3900. Prior to the call connecting, Yamahni Hickinson identifies himself as “money”. During the phone call, Daquantas Howard refers to himself as “Daquantas”, “Quantas”, and “Q”.

19. On October 6, 2021, your Affiant was notified that Yamahni Hickinson had a cell phone (**Item 1**) listed in his property at the Roanoke County – Salem, VA jail. As noted above, **Item 1** has a different IMEI number but the same SIM number as the subpoenaed T-Mobile subscriber information. SIM cards can be moved from one device to another as they store network specific information used to authenticate and identify subscribers on the network.

20. Continuing on October 6, 2021, your Affiant gained access to Daquantas Howard’s cell phone extraction. Cell phone number 281-940-9399 (subscriber Hubert Hickinson) is in his contacts as “money” with a photograph of an African American male who appears to be Yamahni Hickinson. From January 2021 through April 2021, your Affiant noted numerous text message conversations between Yamahni Hickinson and Daquantas Howard discussing purchasing, transporting, and distributing “pints”, “percs”, “RPs”, and “30s”. Based on my training, experience, and consultation with other law enforcement, I know these controlled narcotics to be Promethazine with Codeine, Percocet, Acetaminophen 325 mg and Oxycodone Hydrochloride 10 mg, and Oxycodone Hydrochloride 30 mg, respectively. Both Yamahni Hickinson and Daquantas Howard discuss purchase price and payment through “Zelle” and the “Cash App”. On multiple occasions Yamahni Hickinson communicates the shipping and delivery of Priority Mail and Priority Express Mail parcels through the USPS. Additionally, Yamahni Hickinson sent several confirmation pictures of the USPS receipt containing the unique tracking number to Daquantas Howard. Your Affiant reviewed a USPS parcel delivery history report for 1066 Greenhurst Ave NW, Roanoke, VA 24012, noting approximately five additional parcels mailed from Baytown, TX with postage paid for in cash.

21. Your Affiant knows based on training and experience that the U.S. Mail is often used by drug traffickers and drug trafficking organizations to transport controlled substances. Additionally, USPS Priority Mail and Priority Express Mail are commonly used to transport controlled substances because drug traffickers can track parcels, control dispatch times and locations, and have a guarantee of delivery in one to three days. Drug traffickers will often use fictitious name and address information when mailing parcels containing controlled substances to conceal the sender's and/or recipient's identity while ensuring parcels are delivered correctly.

22. **Item 1** is currently in the possession of the USPS-OIG and stored at the Roanoke, VA Sub-Office. The device was seized on October 13, 2021, to preserve evidence while your Affiant applied for a search warrant.

TECHNICAL TERMS

23. Based on my training and experience, I use the following technical terms to convey the following meanings:

- a. **Wireless telephone:** A wireless telephone (or mobile telephone, or cellular telephone) is a handheld wireless device used for voice and data communication through radio signals. These telephones send signals through networks of transmitter/receivers, enabling communication with other wireless telephones or traditional "land line" telephones. A wireless telephone usually contains a "call log," which records the telephone number, date, and time of calls made to and from the phone. In addition to enabling voice communications, wireless telephones offer a broad range of capabilities. These capabilities include storing names and phone numbers in electronic "address books;" sending, receiving, and

storing text messages and e-mail; taking, sending, receiving, and storing still photographs and moving video; storing and playing back audio files; storing dates, appointments, and other information on personal calendars; and accessing and downloading information from the Internet. Wireless telephones may also include global positioning system (“GPS”) technology for determining the location of the device.

- b. GPS: A GPS navigation device uses the Global Positioning System to display its current location. It often contains records the locations where it has been. Some GPS navigation devices can give a user driving or walking directions to another location. These devices can contain records of the addresses or locations involved in such navigation. The Global Positioning System (generally abbreviated “GPS”) consists of 24 NAVSTAR satellites orbiting the Earth. Each satellite contains an extremely accurate clock. Each satellite repeatedly transmits by radio a mathematical representation of the current time, combined with a special sequence of numbers. These signals are sent by radio, using specifications that are publicly available. A GPS antenna on Earth can receive those signals. When a GPS antenna receives signals from at least four satellites, a computer connected to that antenna can mathematically calculate the antenna’s latitude, longitude, and sometimes altitude with a high level of precision.
- c. Internet: The Internet is a global network of computers and other electronic devices that communicate with each other. Due to the structure of the Internet, connections between devices on the Internet often cross state and international

borders, even when the devices communicating with each other are in the same state.

CONCLUSION

24. *Nature of examination.* Based on the foregoing, and consistent with Rule 41(e)(2)(B), the warrant I am applying for would permit the examination of the device consistent with the warrant. The examination may require authorities to employ techniques, including but not limited to computer-assisted scans of the entire medium, that might expose many parts of the device to human inspection in order to determine whether it is evidence described by the warrant.

25. *Manner of execution.* The warrant will be executed between 6:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m.

26. Based on my training and experience, and the facts set forth in this affidavit, there is probable cause to believe that the electronic device Apple cell phone, Model A2172, bearing IMEI: 353042115312170, contains evidence of a crime. Accordingly, a search warrant is requested authorizing examination of **Item 1** described in Attachment A to seek the items and other information described in Attachment B, incorporated herein by reference.

Respectfully submitted,



Todd C. Phillips
Special Agent
United States Postal Service - Office of
Inspector General

Subscribed and sworn to before me
this 18th day of October, 2021

Robert S. Ballou

The Honorable Robert S. Ballou
United States Magistrate Judge
Western District of Virginia